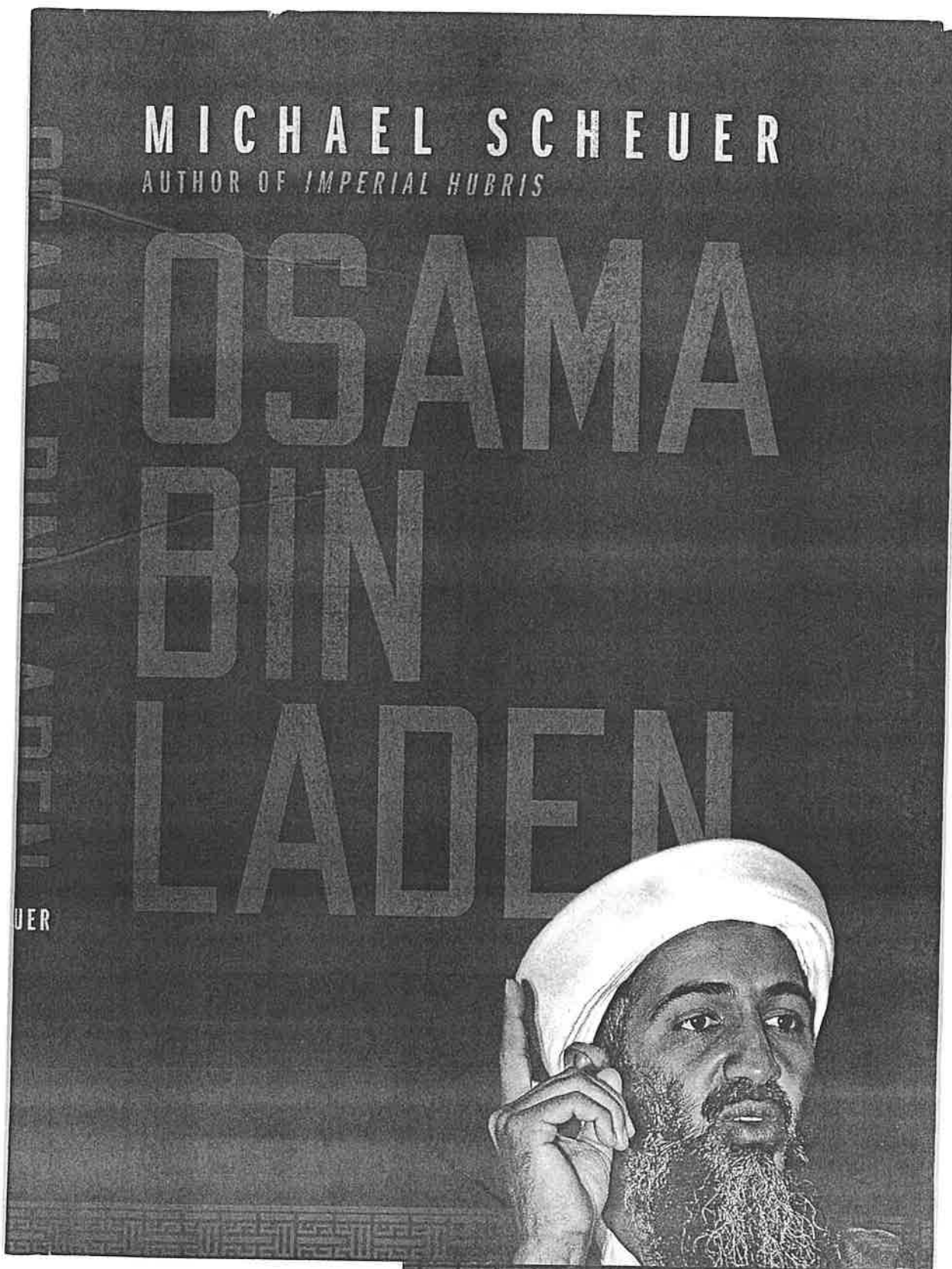


# **EXHIBIT AAL**



April 27, 2021

Exhibit  
John Sidel

**0606**

bin Laden killed in the same way. The victory had been won by "poor, barely equipped mujahedin playing a relatively small role since 1989, when they were urged to act, noting that they were still small considering the numbers, or using their skills. In any case, he reveals a realistic assessment of the mujahedin's victory was further limited by their fight against a superpower, the United States. From 1989 onward, bin Laden's strategy, whether the infidels could be defeated or they would be beaten. And the lessons bin Laden learned from the Afghan jihad.

bin Laden was convinced that God's will was to prevail if Muslims persevere. bin Laden told his impatient, impatient followers, "In Afghanistan, we must learn from the Russians. . . . Our strength and these facilities God asked us to use and mujahedin losses are never God has ordained," bin Laden said. "The only thing given us the ability to do is to fight for us. A true Muslim must persevere in adversity."<sup>83</sup>

bin Laden's fighters suffered in the world with training became a global issue. bin Laden's fighters in Jaji and Jalalabad, bin

bin Laden decided operations should be launched only after training had been completed; eagerness for martyrdom would henceforth be subordinated to a professionalism inculcated at the military training camps.<sup>84</sup> That he achieved this goal is evident in al-Qaeda's operations since 1998, both in terms of terror attacks and insurgency combat.<sup>85</sup> "[You must] excel in your actions," bin Laden told the Afghan and Iraqi mujahedin in 2007, "for among the things that sadden Muslims and delight the unbelievers is the hindering of some combat operations against the enemy because of negligence in any of the stages of preparation for the operation, whether it be reconnaissance of the target, training, integrity and suitability of weapons, ammunition, quality of the explosive device or other such arrangements. And when you lay a mine, do it right, and don't leave so much as one wounded American soldier or spy."<sup>86</sup>

### Experience

Bin Laden learned in Afghanistan that no one wins every battle. "One day we win and one day we lose."<sup>87</sup> Mistakes were God's means of teaching them. After the Jalalabad battle, Isam Darraz recalls bin Laden "stood between the youth and lectured them saying 'it is possible that the enemy's success in attacking the mujahedin is due to our mistakes, we must learn from our mistakes.'" And despite defeat, "The brethren's experience in using rockets, mortars, and artillery has been broadened."<sup>88</sup> In later years, bin Laden's bodyguard Abu Jandal, himself a senior al-Qaeda trainer, would explain how bin Laden insisted that al-Qaeda training camps be as rigorous as possible. In the case of al-Qaeda's al-Faruq Camp in Afghanistan, Abu Jandal said, "it was established on the basis of a clear military methodology, a military college where cadets passed through a number of stages and levels until they finally graduated at the command level, as military commanders capable of leading any jihadist action anywhere. The idea of establishing that military college was a global issue. Thus, if the jihad in Afghanistan ends, graduates of the college can go anywhere in the world and capably command battles there. Those objectives have been actually achieved by the young men who have moved to many fronts outside Afghanistan, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chechnya, the



Philippines, Eritrea, Somalia, Burma, and elsewhere. The fronts do not arise from a vacuum, but were the outcome of the action of well-trained cadres who had received methodical military training.”<sup>89</sup>

### Security

After Afghanistan, security considerations dominated bin Laden’s planning. He often invokes the Prophet’s admonition to “seek help in fulfilling needs by keeping them secret,” and sees attempts to infiltrate the mujahedin by Arab governments—especially the Saudis—as the most dangerous threat. While advising that “you must protect your secrets,” bin Laden also warns his men that they must “beware of . . . the hypocrites who infiltrate your ranks to stir up strife in the mujahid ranks.”<sup>90</sup> The inability of the West and its Arab allies to kill him, eliminate al-Qaeda, or destroy the group’s media or financial operations after nearly a decade and a half of war speaks to bin Laden’s successes in maintaining organizational and operational security.

### Patience

The improvement of bin Laden’s fighters between Jaji in 1987 and Jalalabad in 1989 was the result of both experience gained in battle and patient training. Patience would, after Jalalabad, become a hallmark of al-Qaeda’s operations. Small, harassing operations “would be easy to conduct,” bin Laden would contend, but they would not defeat the enemy. What al-Qaeda would come to term a “qualitative operation”—one which would have major impact on the foe—“obviously requires good preparation” and, therefore, bin Laden concluded, we need to “be patient and pious, for that is the provision and weapon of he who hopes for victory.”<sup>91</sup>

### Bankruptcy

Bin Laden believes the USSR was defeated in Afghanistan because of the economic damage it suffered rather than from military attrition. “Gorbachev explained to them [the politburo],” bin Laden wrote, “that the [Afghan] war had bled the Russian economy dry and they could

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properties.<sup>51</sup> His lieutenants also worked with Sudan's militia forces, and collaborated closely with Sudanese intelligence service chief Salah Abdallah Gosh, collecting information in Africa and abroad.<sup>52</sup> Bin Laden also sent al-Panshiri and al-Masri on a reconnaissance mission to Somalia. Al-Panshiri was later sent to contact Islamist organizations in Eritrea, delivering cash to that country's Jamaat-i Jihad group and helping it to build several training camps.<sup>53</sup>

There has been an endless debate over what role al-Qaeda played in Somalia during the U.S.-led UN operation Restore Hope. Estimates go from large to tiny to none at all. The truth seems to be that bin Laden's Afghan Arabs—as in Afghanistan—played a small role in the Somali conflict. Bin Laden had built several training camps in southern Somalia before the U.S.-led UN mission arrived, and al-Qaeda leaders were active there. Always concerned about safe havens, al-Qaeda saw the Somali camps as potential refuges were al-Qaeda members forced to flee Sudan, Saudi Arabia, or Yemen. Abu Jandal has explained, "They aspired to make Somalia a stronghold for them close to the Arab Peninsula because the brothers in al-Qaeda had an aim to liberate the Arab Peninsula later on. If al-Qaeda established a solid base in Somalia it also could be used to block the United States, which [will] certainly seek to control the Horn of Africa."<sup>54</sup> Al-Qaeda members provided weapons and training to Somali fighters in 1993–1994, but the role they played on the ground in Somalia is best described as minor.

More important is what bin Laden and his lieutenants learned from observing the U.S. performance. Bin Laden believed that "the American soldier was a paper tiger and [would] after a few blows run in defeat . . . dragging their corpses and shameful defeat." This view was summarized by Abu Jandal, who says al-Qaeda concluded that while the "U.S. arsenal is full of weapons, it does not have men."<sup>55</sup>

Al-Qaeda members were also working in other parts of Africa and the world to establish the organization's presence, to prepare for war, or both. In 1992, for example, bin Laden sent his friend the Afghan veteran Khalid Fawwaz to Nairobi, to build the Kenyan network that eventually prepared the 1998 attack on the U.S. embassy in that city. As cover for this work, Fawwaz opened an import-export company named Asma in 1993.<sup>56</sup> In 1994, bin Laden moved Fawwaz to London

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to handle al-Qaeda interests there, and replaced him in Nairobi with his secretary Wadih al-Hage, another Afghan veteran.<sup>57</sup> Wali Khan Amin Shah was bin Laden's advance man in places al-Qaeda was considering attacks, communicating by sending encoded messages via "mail drops and fax machines." In the Philippines, Khan worked with Ramzi Yousef—author of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing—to plan attacks on President Clinton and Pope John Paul II in Manila, develop plans for bombing U.S. airliners flying Pacific routes, and assist Filipino Islamists to build training camps.<sup>58</sup>

In Sudan, bin Laden developed relations with EIJ leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. As noted, bin Laden first met al-Zawahiri during the Afghan jihad when both were involved with Shaykh Azzam. Al-Zawahiri was then fully focused on Egypt, and his influence on bin Laden was minimal. As we have seen, others have argued that al-Zawahiri skillfully inserted senior EIJ members, such as Abu Ubaydah al-Panshiri and Abu Hafs al-Masri, into bin Laden's inner circle—and later into al-Qaeda—and by so doing set himself on the road to becoming bin Laden's *éminence grise*, or even "Osama's brain." Yet there is no evidence whatever that, for example, either Abu Ubaydah or Abu Hafs were less than totally loyal to bin Laden; and there is nothing to suggest that either acted to manipulate bin Laden on al-Zawahiri's behalf, paving the way for his taking over al-Qaeda. Indeed, there also is nothing to suggest that al-Zawahiri—from the time he met bin Laden until today—has had much impact on his thinking; indeed, all the evidence points in exactly the opposite direction. The story of al-Zawahiri craftily brainwashing bin Laden and hijacking al-Qaeda is cut from whole cloth by the Saudis and others, as part of their "good-Saudi-boy-led-astray-by-evil-Egyptians" narrative.

Nowhere was the Saudi spin more evident than in Lawrence Wright's book *The Looming Tower*. Wright recounts a tale from Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi journalist, that has him being sent to Sudan by the bin Laden family to obtain an interview from a war-weary and discouraged bin Laden, longing for nothing more than to be a farmer and almost ready to renounce violence. "That would be a very public signal to the [Saudi] government that he accepted its terms [to give up jihad]." After several meetings with Khashoggi, Wright says, bin Laden